

Gaining Momentum: New Orleans 2010 Campaign for Active Transportation Case Statement



A Project of the Regional Planning Commission, Louisiana Public Health Institute,
City of New Orleans Dept. of Public Works and the University of New Orleans
Center for Urban and Public Affairs.

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Background: A National Vision for Nonmotorized Transportation

The Nonmotorized Transportation Pilot Program is a federal program established in the 2005 transportation bill, SAFETEA-LU, to create “a network of nonmotorized transportation infrastructure facilities, including sidewalks, bicycle lanes, and pedestrian and bicycle trails, that connect directly with transit stations, schools, residences, businesses, recreation areas, and other community activity centers” designed to “demonstrate the extent to which bicycling and walking can carry a significant part of the transportation load, and represent a major portion of the transportation solution, within selected communities” (Section 1807 Nonmotorized Transportation Pilot Program). Minneapolis, MN, Sheboygan, WI, Columbia, MO, and Marin, CA were initially selected to participate in this \$100 million program from 2006 to 2010.

While the program is not yet complete, initial research points to the potential that an integrated system of nonmotorized transportation has for meeting mobility needs of community residents. The Interim Report to the US Congress on the Program found that 29% of all trips in the city of Minneapolis were taken by walking, bicycling, and transit. This large base percentage in a cold weather climate shows the tremendous potential that nonmotorized transportation has for meeting the mobility needs of communities around the country.

With the initial success of this program as an enticement, cities across the country are creating case statements that express their interest in participating in a new, expanded Program that would take the number of participating cities from 4 to 40 and expand resources to \$50 million per participating community. The national Rails-to-Trails Conservancy is taking the lead in collecting these case statements and intends to present them to Congressional leaders to show the national desire for an expanded program.

This initial case statement for New Orleans is a joint project of a group of committed regional partners. Regional Planning Commission, the City of New Orleans Department of Public Works, Louisiana Public Health Institute, and the University of New Orleans Center for Urban and Public Affairs have collectively worked over the years to help improve walking and bicycling conditions for the region. This case statement, however, is in no way meant as a “final” draft of a regional vision, but instead as a starting point for extending the regional dialogue about the scope, components, and potential of an integrated nonmotorized transportation system for New Orleans. Projects were selected for this document based on their potential to connect people with community destinations through nonmotorized infrastructure. As the starting point in this dialogue, we fully expect that some projects will be substituted during the in-depth planning process that will be required to carry out a project of this scale.

Gaining Momentum: Clean, Green, and Gaining Speed

The creation of an integrated, green transportation system forms the core of post-Hurricane Katrina transportation plans for New Orleans. Aiming squarely to provide safe, convenient nonmotorized choices for the diverse New Orleans population, transportation

plans for New Orleans have identified the key elements of an integrated active transportation network. The Unified New Orleans Plan, the guiding vision for post-Katrina recovery, contains over 85 references to key bicycle-pedestrian projects identified by residents as vital neighborhood recovery projects. These projects, coupled with existing planned active transportation projects from the New Orleans Master Plan and with the numerous recovery projects, have the potential to transform transportation choice for New Orleans. With over 550 miles of planned bicycle facilities, New Orleans can move from a community with recognized potential as a 2008 honorable mention “Bicycle-Friendly Community” to a strong example of a community with an integrated, multi-modal transportation system that is strongly positioned to deal with the challenges of the 21st century.

Selected Bicycle-Friendly Communities	Designation	Nonmotorized Mode Share (Walk, Bike, Transit Census 2000)
Washington, DC	Bronze	47.95%
San Francisco, CA	Gold	44.54%
New Orleans	Honorable Mention	20.59%
Portland, OR	Platinum	20.20%
Austin, TX	Silver	8.22%
St. Petersburg, FL	Bronze	6.14%

The vision of active transportation represented by these plans defines an integrated network of 392 miles of bicycle facilities within the City of New Orleans. With funding from a local \$4 million bond initiative, CDBG recovery funds, and funding for large-scale road replacement projects taking place around the city, the infusion of resources from the Nonmotorized Transportation Pilot Program can help to leverage significant local and recovery resources to help truly rebuild New Orleans as national leader.

The chart below shows the tremendous potential impact of the Nonmotorized Transportation Pilot Program in building an integrated active transportation system for New Orleans. As a baseline, bikeway miles in New Orleans will total 42 miles in 2010. While this is a dramatic improvement from the 4.9 miles of facilities in 2004, this total translates into a fairly low ratio of total road miles to bikeway facilities of 37:1. By way of comparison, Madison, WI, a recognized national leader, had a ratio of 6:1 (Transportation Alternatives 1998). The ratio with the Nonmotorized Transportation Pilot Program, however, can significantly improve to 4:1. This jump would place New Orleans as a national leader in providing safe, healthy transportation choices to its diverse population.



The largest set of projects listed in this case statement is drawn from the New Orleans Master Plan's transportation element. The active transportation component of the Master Plan, adopted by the City Council in 2004, is based around significantly expanding on-street facilities in a phased process. The second key planning document is the already mentioned Unified New Orleans Plan that contains over 85 bicycle-pedestrian projects that run the gamut from large trail projects to streetscape improvements designed to improve neighborhood accessibility. The third key planning document is the Regional Planning Commission's Bicycle/Pedestrian Master Plan. This plan provides a regional vision for an interconnected network of walking and bicycling facilities with an emphasis on connecting corridors into the city of New Orleans. These connecting corridor projects are included to help link the city core with adjacent communities. The final category of projects is drawn from the numerous recovery projects that are planned for New Orleans in response to the damage of Hurricane Katrina.

The New Orleans planning model defined in these plans is based on 4 key principles:

1. Diversification of walking and bicycling opportunities
2. Emphasis on convenience and safety at multiple levels
3. Use of best national practices in design and implementation
4. Integration of bicycling- and pedestrian-friendly policies and laws

This 4- point strategy is designed to help dramatically re-envision New Orleans as a city of safe, vibrant neighborhoods where walking and bicycling are viable transportation choices.

Carrying the Load: New Orleans as a Potential National Leader

Taken together the projects listed in these four planning documents, if funded through the help of the Nonmotorized Transportation Pilot Transportation Program, will create an active transportation system that will carry a significant part of the transportation load for

New Orleans. Nationally, nearly half of all trips are under 3 miles in length; the perfect length for cycling or walking. With its tradition of neighborhood mixed-use corridors, the percentage of short trips in New Orleans is probably even higher. The percentage of short trips and the density of local destinations make New Orleans a prime candidate for active transportation transformation that produces significant mode share change that helps to decreased congestion and greenhouse gas emissions.

The share of active transportation trips is already fairly substantial. Prior to Katrina, the share of work trips from walking, bicycling, and transit in New Orleans was 21% (1.19% bicycling, 5.35% pedestrian, and 14.05% transit). In the American Community Survey taken post-Katrina in 2006, New Orleans has seen a rise in bicycling trips to 3.1%, a small decline in pedestrian share to 4.4%, and a dramatic decline in transit trips to 12.8%. Linking community facilities through the active transportation projects listed in the community plans will allow New Orleans to show significant improvements in nonmotorized mode share, creating a fully functioning system where residents have real choice about safe, clean transportation modes. With more busses and streetcars coming back on line, the infusion of new bicycle and pedestrian facilities can help to create a strong nonmotorized system that not only pushes mode shares back to pre-Katrina levels, but propels New Orleans to become a national leader in active transportation.

In addition to helping minimize congestion and decrease greenhouse gas emissions, the proposed active transportation system is also good for business. The proposed system will connect the area's employment centers, universities, schools, and neighborhood commercial centers together providing a safe and healthy transportation choice. With many destinations packed in close proximity, the proposed New Orleans active transportation system will open up access to local businesses and services to both the estimated 15.3% of New Orleans region residents that don't own a car and to those who opt for a healthy transportation choice.

The vision of vital walkable and bikeable urban places is at the core of New Orleans' strategy to position the region for future growth. Christopher Leinberger from the Brookings Institution has pointed out, these types of walkable and bikeable urban places are vital to healthy, growing communities. He argues that:

The next American Dream is based upon the recognition that the market wants a built environment that provides choice, lines up with the new economy that is emerging and is more environmentally, fiscally, and economically sustainable (2007, p. 11).

New Orleans is poised to make this vision a reality. The map in the following section shows the complete, integrated system. The following tables outline the cost estimates for these key projects. With the provision of resources from an expanded Nonmotorized Transportation Pilot Program, New Orleans can create a fully integrated active transportation system that links residents to vital commercial neighborhoods with healthy and safe mobility options.

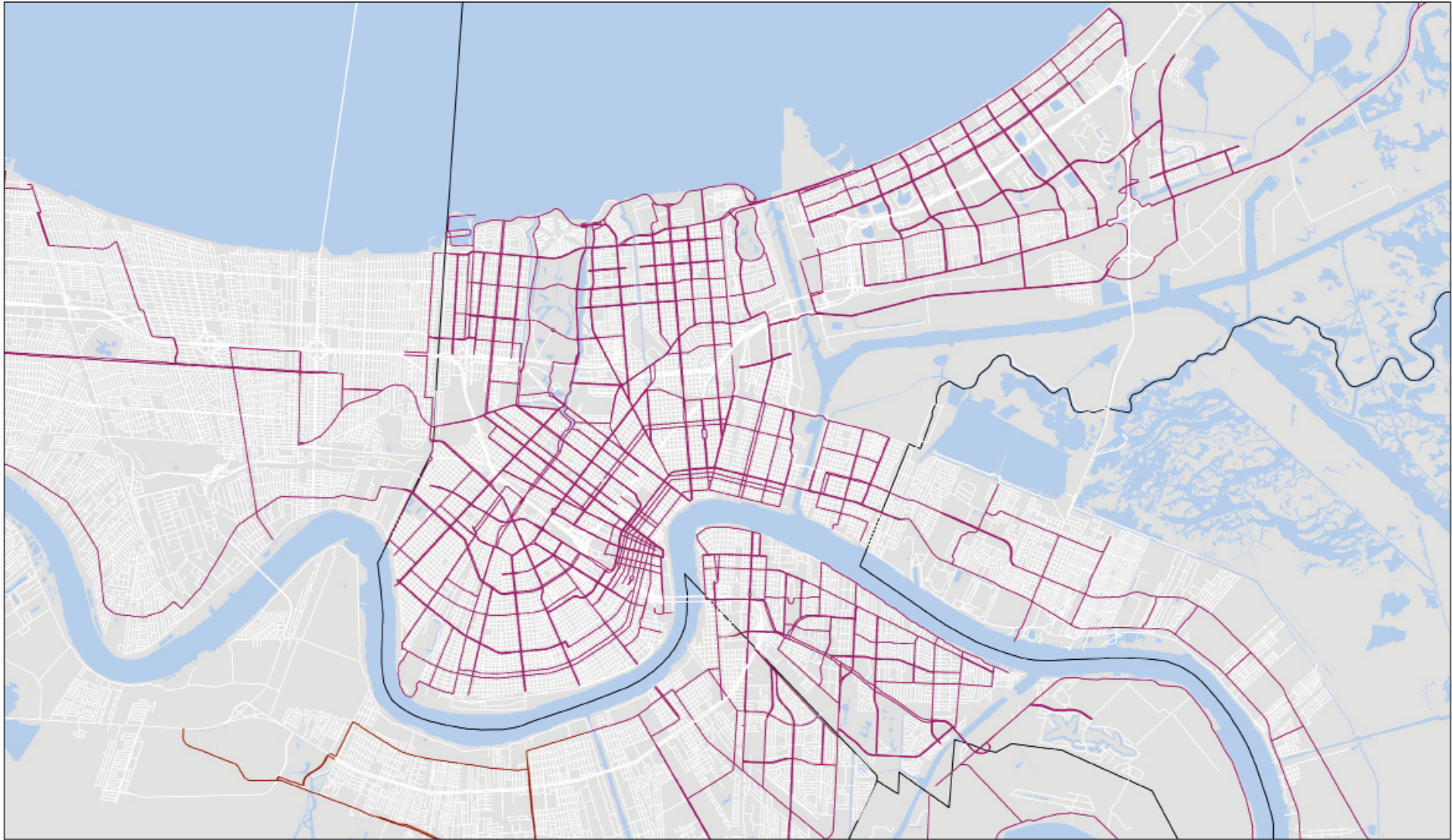
Integrated System: From Vision to Reality

The project list and map below represent the best current planning about the basic components of an integrated active transportation network for New Orleans. The project list contains bicycle facilities drawn from key city and regional planning documents and hurricane recovery plans.

While the identified current planning projects provide a great basis for establishing an integrated system, analysis for this case statement has identified significant infrastructure gaps that remain unaddressed in the current planning documents. To help fashion a more complete, integrated network of facilities, the project team included a set of connecting bicycle projects to tie the planned projects together. The project team has not, however, added pedestrian projects or larger infrastructure projects such as bridges to the case statement.

New Orleans NMT System Metro Total		
Facility	Proposed Mileage	Estimated Cost
Exclusive Bike Lane	339.60	\$11,886,000.00
Shared Lane	163.75	\$3,275,000.00
Wide Shoulder	28.20	\$4,089,000.00
Bicycle Boulevard	8.70	\$1,740,000.00
Shared-Use Trail	3.10	\$6,200,000.00
Levee Top Trail	8.00	\$8,000,000.00
Bridge Connectivity and Pedestrian Projects	TBD	\$14,000,000.00
Regional Total	551.35	\$49,190,000.00

A crucial benefit of the Nonmotorized Transportation Pilot Program for New Orleans will be the ability to plan for a fully integrated system that includes, for the first time, all the crucial elements of a nonmotorized transportation system. The project team has created a category within the funding tables to specify resources that should be set aside for these integrating projects.



New Orleans Metro Proposed Bike Routes Non-motorized Transportation Case Statement



New Orleans Metro Non-Motorized Transportation Network

Summary by Parish

Orleans Parish		
Facility	Proposed Mileage	Estimated Cost
Exclusive Bike Lane	234.60	\$8,211,000.00
Shared Lane	121.50	\$2,430,000.00
Wide Shoulder	21.80	\$3,161,000.00
Bicycle Boulevard	8.70	\$1,740,000.00
Shared-Use Trail	3.10	\$6,200,000.00
Levee Top Trail	8.00	\$8,000,000.00
Parish Total	397.70	\$29,742,000.00

Jefferson Parish		
Facility	Proposed Mileage	Estimated Cost
Exclusive Bike Lane	69.00	\$2,415,000.00
Shared Lane	29.80	\$596,000.00
Wide Shoulder	0.00	\$0.00
Bicycle Boulevard	0.00	\$0.00
Shared-Use Trail	0.00	\$0.00
Levee Top Trail	0.00	\$0.00
Parish Total	98.80	\$3,011,000.00

Plaquemines Parish		
Facility	Proposed Mileage	Estimated Cost
Exclusive Bike Lane	7.85	\$274,750.00
Shared Lane	8.00	\$160,000.00
Wide Shoulder	5.20	\$754,000.00
Bicycle Boulevard	0.00	\$0.00
Shared-Use Trail	0.00	\$0.00
Levee Top Trail	0.00	\$0.00
Parish Total	21.05	\$1,188,750.00

St. Bernard Parish		
Facility	Proposed Mileage	Estimated Cost
Exclusive Bike Lane	7.85	\$274,750.00
Shared Lane	8.00	\$160,000.00
Wide Shoulder	5.20	\$754,000.00
Bicycle Boulevard	0.00	\$0.00
Shared-Use Trail	0.00	\$0.00
Levee Top Trail	0.00	\$0.00
Parish Total	21.05	\$1,188,750.00

New Orleans NMT System Metro Total		
Facility	Proposed Mileage	Estimated Cost
Exclusive Bike Lane	319.30	\$11,175,500.00
Shared Lane	167.30	\$3,346,000.00
Wide Shoulder	32.20	\$4,669,000.00
Bicycle Boulevard	8.70	\$1,740,000.00
Shared-Use Trail	3.10	\$6,200,000.00
Levee Top Trail	8.00	\$8,000,000.00
Bridge Connectivity and Pedestrian Projects	TBD	\$14,000,000.00
Regional Total	538.60	\$49,130,500.00

Facility Price Estimates per mile	
Shared Lane	\$20,000.00
Exclusive Lane	\$35,000.00
Wide Shoulder	\$145,000.00
Bicycle Boulevard	\$200,000.00
Shared-Use Trail	\$2,000,000.00
Levee Top Trail	\$1,000,000.00